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Chainmaille artist

Ari Novus creates jewelry with precision

See story on page 6

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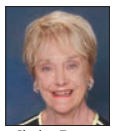
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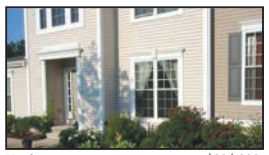
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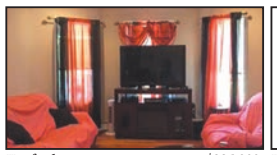
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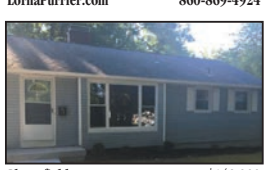
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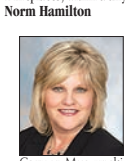
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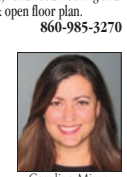
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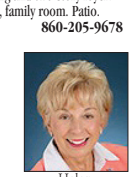
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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"I was gone, no pulse, no heartbeat.
They brought me back."
– Francine Lavigne-Teague

See story page 15

ON THE COVER

Jewelry artist Ari Novis designs and constructs chainmaille bracelets and necklaces with silver and titanium.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 6

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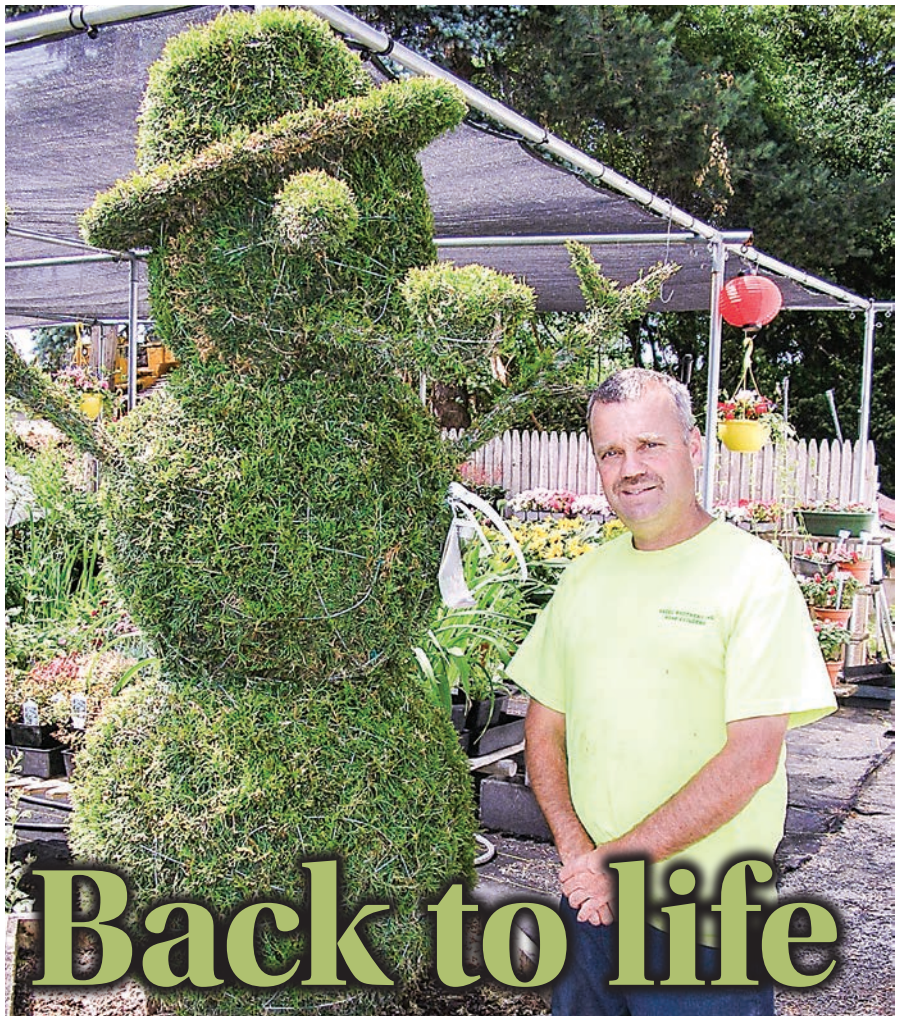

Photos by Mark Jahne

Back to life

Sunny Farm garden center and nursery opens on former Vicino site

Left: Owner Henry Vasel says sculpted shrubs are proving to be a best seller, such as this one designed to look like a snowman.
Right: The exterior of the property is full of brightly colored flowers and plants.

by Mark Jahne
Editor

A.J. Vicino & Sons was a long-running local business operated by a family known to many residents. Now, the nursery and garden center at 259 New Britain Ave. is called Sunny Farm and it owned and operated by another familiar name – Henry Vasel.

Vasel, the former mayor and current member of the Town Council, bought the property in March. The Vicino business was fading and all but dormant after the death of the two men who ran it for so many years.

He still owns and operates his longtime family business, Vasel Brothers Construction Co. in Berlin. Vasel is also a captain with the Rocky Hill Volunteer Fire Department.

The businessman is confident that he can compete with larger stores by offering customers personal attention to go with top-quality products for the lawn, garden and yard. He said sales are off to a brisk start, and shrubs sculpted into the shapes of such things as dolphins and snowmen are proving popular.

Special items offered for sale as Father's Day gifts sold well – these included chef bowls filled with herbs and spices for grilling and mojito bowls.

> **"The feedback from the public has been incredible."**
> **–Henry Vasel**

The inventory includes annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs, vegetable plants, several varieties of mulch, top soil, decorative stone, bagged products, seeds, grass seed, hanging baskets, Belgium blocks, boulders and planters.

"I bought three new trucks for deliveries and we have three loaders," Vasel said.

Sunny Farm has three full-time staff and others who work on a part-time basis, some of whom are members of the Vicino family and/or have worked there in the past. Vasel trusts their knowledge of the business.

He took ownership of the land and started a new enterprise in large part because he couldn't stand to see the Vicino operation fade into oblivion. That business was still technically open, but for the most part inactive. It dated from 1955.

He also saw it as a good business opportunity and sank a substantial amount of money into rehabbing the building and grounds. There are more than five acres on the parcel. If Vasel had not purchased the land with the intent of operating it as a nursery and garden center, local zoning would most likely have resulted in the construction of a residential subdivision.

"I drive past it on my way to and from work every day. It was a staple of Rocky Hill for so many years," he said. "We gutted the whole inside."

"The feedback from the public has been incredible," he said. "We are very, very delighted with the town of Rocky Hill."

Jim McDonald is the manager of Sunny Farm. He worked for the Vicinos and called the transition to Vasel a smooth one.

"This is my 11th year here," he said. "Everything has been great. We've got more of a variety of shrubs, perennials and annuals."

There has been a steady stream of positive feedback from

customers. McDonald said one customer told him the property is so attractive that they should sell tickets just for the right to walk around and look at everything.

Vasel started out by donating more than $13,000 worth of trees and shrubs to the town, which will be planted at the Veterans Memorial Amphitheater in Elm Ridge Park, the Challenger Field in the same park and West Hill School.

He also donated vegetable plants for municipal garden plots behind the Kennedy House on Old Main Street. Sunny Farm also sponsors two Little League teams.

The town has made a few "modest" purchases from Sunny Farm, as Vasel described them, and this quickly became a political issue. He doesn't think there is anything wrong with that.

"The town of Rocky Hill had a longstanding relationship, perhaps as long as 15 years, with Vicino Nurseries. The town is free to make purchases from whomever it wants, but if the town has been happy with Vicino Nurseries for 15 years, I don't see why it should go somewhere else just because I purchased the property," he said.

"As a member of the Town Council, I am not involved in any aspect of any decision about the town's purchase of landscaping materials, including trees and shrubs. The issues are not something the council deals with." **RHL**

To contact Sunny Farm call 860-529-1304 or email sunnyfarmllc@yahoo.com.

A front-end loader fills a truck with product. Sunny Farm sells many kinds of stone, mulch and soil.

Owner Henry Vasel shows off the perennials on sale at Sunny Farm, his new nursery and garden center.

Photos by Mark Jahne

"They were wonderful."

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Photo by Lisa Brisson

Jewelry artist Ari Novis focuses on precision

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Despite growing up in an artistic environment, Ari Novis didn't feel part of that world.

"I come from a family of artists. My father was a commercial artist and painter. My brother can sketch and draw cartoons beautifully. I'm completely inept in that respect," Novis said.

Born in Stamford, he went to college out of state and came back to Connecticut to work in the engineering field. Then, about 18 years ago, Novis saw someone make a chainmaille bracelet and he was intrigued.

Wendy Black-Nasta, an artist from Middletown, was teaching a course on it. He took it and was hooked.

Ari Novis creates jewelry from silver and titanium.

"From then on in, I pretty much struck out on my own. There is, with the Internet, a community of folks that make chainmaille and that information is out there. Those are nice resources, but everyone has their own tricks and techniques and specialties," Novis said.

While making jewelry was new to him, the desire to create was not.

"There was always the urge to make things. I just didn't have a medium. The advantage of this is it's a fairly small medium. It's not like sculpture, where you have to move in the granite and go to work," he said.

"This is something you can do in small amounts and with a minimal number of tools. Being an artist is about accumulating tools and finding a reason in your art to buy more tools," he joked.

"I started doing this on my own for my own entertainment. I decided I was going to make one ambitious or heroic piece."

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He chose to make a complex necklace for his wife, Pamela Stowell.

"At the time, she was taking weaving classes at Wesleyan Potters. She wore the necklace down there and was almost strangled by the jewelers that wanted to get a closer look at it. That's when they asked me if I wanted to put anything in the [annual] show," Novis said.

He is attracted to the work for two reasons.

"I like complex, intricate things. The other one is I don't mind doing things that take a really long time; in fact, I find it relaxing. None of these pieces get knocked out in an hour. Some of them can take a month to make. It teaches me patience," Novis said.

He also works at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

"There's the day you start a project and the day you finish. Then there's the number of days in the middle. Longer projects takes more days. It's always nice to have something to be working on. I can have multiple pieces in the process at one time."

There is a strong connection between the jewelry and his engineering background.

"His use of titanium is really interesting. His personal expression is very unique."

–Mary Ruth Shields

"There is an engineering challenge," he said, noting that his pieces require "a tremendous amount of precision."

He starts by winding wire into coils, then cutting the wire into small rings.

"The diameter of the wire is

Photo by Lisa Brisson

Each piece of jewelry that Ari Novis makes is made up of hundreds, or more, individual rings.

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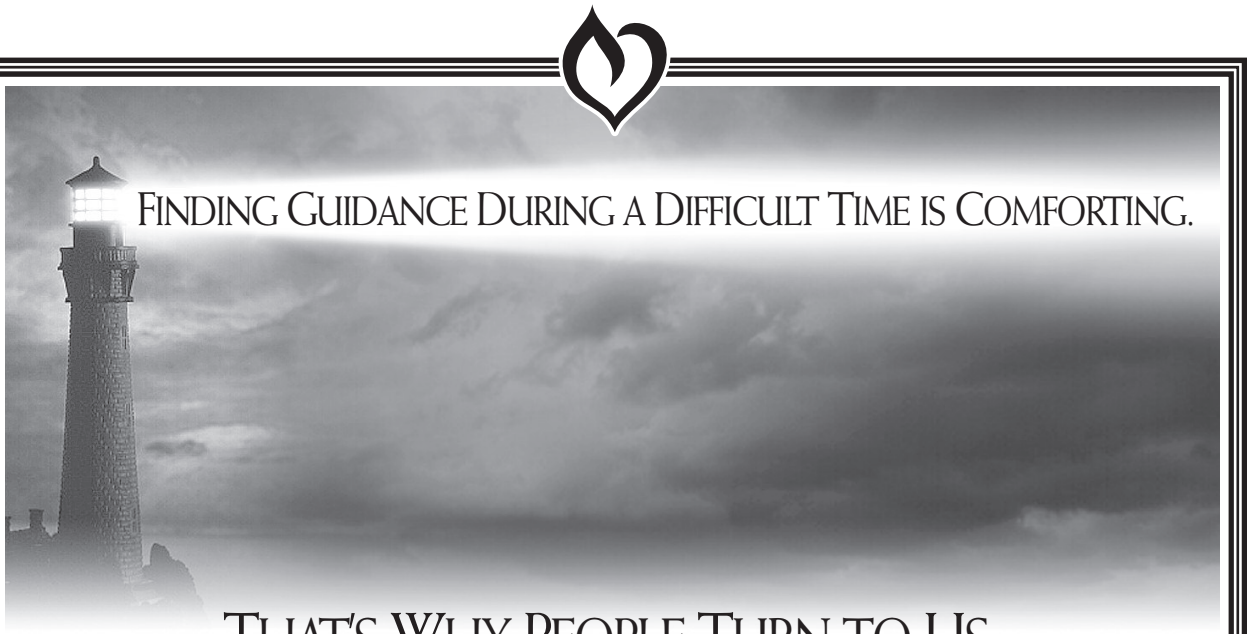

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Photo by Lisa Brisson

Ari Novis makes use of his engineering background when creating his jewelry designs.

critical; the diameter of the ring is critical. Each one of those, if off by a few thousandths of an inch, won't feel right. It would be very stiff or very loose," he said. "I like to think of these as engineered pieces."

A simple bracelet might be made of 200 tiny rings. A more complex necklace could have as many as 1,800. He often works in front of the television set.

"I'm not watching TV – the show is in the background," he said. "The nice thing about that is I can be sitting with my wife and talking [while I'm working]. It's not like I'm going into my artist's studio and hiding."

He designs the pieces in advance and will spend an hour or two getting the materials prepared.

"It doesn't take up much space. I just need a pair of very strong glasses and a couple of pliers," Novis said.

He works in silver and titanium.

"Silver, because it's relatively inexpensive as a material, but you can do a lot of things with it in terms of its properties. Gold is incredibly expensive for a hobby. If I have my pieces out of gold, they'd have to cost eight or nine thousand dollars," he said.

"Titanium, because it's fun. It's very light and you can do things with it. You can color it. You put it in a bath and apply a voltage to it and it changes the color."

Many of his pieces are bracelets and necklaces.

"My signature pieces are the bracelets. None of my bracelets have clasps," he said. "I like pieces that don't have clasps. There's no seam. They're endless."

The links are closed and he doesn't use solder.

"I pride myself on making it that you can't see the closure. That slows things down tremendously. But either you're going to be precise or you're not. You're not half precise," he said.

"The drawback is with the bracelets, I have to size it to the person because everybody's hand is different. When it fits, it just fits. When it's right, it just rolls on and rolls off."

That's one of the reasons he doesn't sell his work online.

"I believe my pieces are best evaluated when you can actually hold in it in your hands. The Internet isn't good enough to provide that kind of feedback. My thing is when someone actually touches it, that's what will grab them is the feel," he said.

"Something that differentiates my work from others is it's got to feel right. There's a number of weaves that I don't do. They might look really nice, but don't feel right in the hand. If I'm going to be handling one of these pieces for quite a few hours while I'm making it, I want to enjoy it," he added.

While Novis has been approached by other shops, his work is only available directly from the artist and at the shop at Wesleyan Potters in Middletown.

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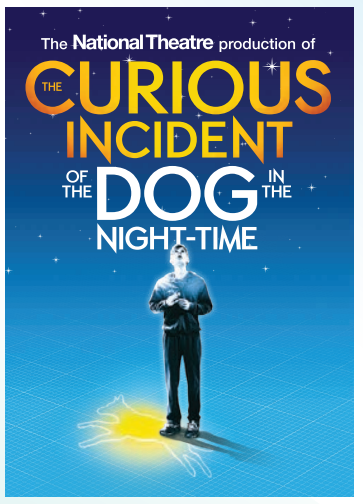

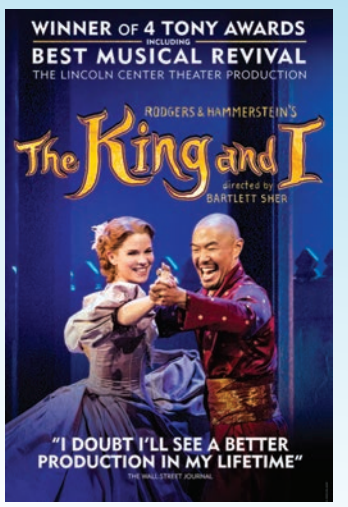

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Photo by Lisa Brisson

Ari Novis enjoys working with titanium, to which he can add color.

Mary Ruth Shields, an artist and manager at the Wesleyan Potters Gallery/Shop, is impressed with his work.

"We're very particular about the quality of the jewelry we accept into the annual sale. We try to keep things here so we're not duplicating a lot of people's work," Shields said.

"We obviously have key members that put their things in the shop, so we try to make sure we don't have a lot of the same things. His use of titanium is really interesting. His personal expression is very unique."

Novis' work is featured in both the shop and at the annual sale. Prices range from about $80 for a simple titanium bracelet to $675 for a more complex undulating necklace. He's always on the lookout for inspiration for new designs.

"A few years ago I was lucky enough to be in England, and I went to the Victoria and Albert Museum, primarily because they have a section there on old armor. I was able to see classic chainmaille going back and they also have jewelry," he said.

"I'm trying to add new designs simply because I can get bored," he added.

That can happen, for example, when he is trying to stock up in advance of a show.

"If I feel I'm doing this because I have to fill up a show, it's not fun anymore. I make some of the old favorites because folks are looking for them and I also try to come up with something new," he said.

"I might make two of these usual ones and then I'll reward myself by making something new. There are a few of them I haven't sold, but I still love them."

He also might create a more complex piece, such as an undulating necklace. He enjoys designing those because of the changes in size.

"That's a real challenge, designing it to get the sizes right. I did a number of iterations [because they were] too stiff or too loose," he said. "I figured I'd make one for my wife, then a friend of hers saw it and wanted one. Since then, I've made about 20 of them."

Even if he doesn't sell them, that's all right with Novis, whose business name is Novis Design, which was the name of his late father Harold's business.

"I sell the pieces to buy more tools, to buy more material, to make more pieces. I'm not doing this for a living and I'm not doing it to make money," he said.

Novis estimated that he makes just $7 or $8 an hour, based on the time involved in making each piece. Other jewelers are among his biggest fans.

"The people who seem to enjoy them the most are other jewelers. If you look at it, you might say, 'That's interesting.' Whereas jewelers realize the amount of work that went into them, the amount of effort that went into that," he said.

A piece might take a month to complete, working on it every day.

"You really can't do more than a couple of hours a day because of your eyes and your hands," Novis said.

"Like any good engineer, I have a little workshop in the basement that handles the tools, so I can work the wire. I don't spend a lot of time down there. Most of the time is spent weaving and that I do upstairs in the light."

Whether or not he expands his reach to new buyers is beside the point.

"This stuff takes time. It's not full time and I don't want it to be," Novis said.

"I want it to be fun. It's all about the fun." **RHL**

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Mayor Claudia Baio, far left, greets diners (inset photo and to the right) during one of her traveling Coffee with the Mayor stops at Mitchell's Family Restaurant on the Silas Deane Highway.

Courtesy photo

From the Mayor's Desk

Mayors work together to strengthen the region

by Mayor Claudia Baio

Happy summer. It is hard to believe that we are already half way through, with 4th of July behind us and Labor Day not too far ahead.

Thank you to everyone who attended our most recent Coffee with the Mayor event at Mitchell's Family Restaurant. It is always a pleasure to be able to speak with people in a casual setting.

As you may have noticed, the summer road maintenance paving of various streets is proceeding in accordance with the set schedule. The schedule can be viewed on the town website.

Also, the state will be replacing the Main Street (Route 99) bridge that runs between Stepney Circle and Hillside Avenue and over Hog Brook. The initial work has already started with an anticipated completion this September.

This will result in some lane closures. In August, the road will be completely closed for seven consecutive days while the contractor works around the clock to install the new bridge. The end result will be worth the inconvenience.

At our recent council meeting July 18, the state Department of Transportation presented information on the larger bridge project planned for 2017 to replace the two old bridges on Elm street. That project will result in a longer road closure and will be funded entirely through federal (80 percent) and state (20 percent) dollars, so there is no cost to the town.

As promised, this month's column is a collaborative effort from local mayors to report on our recent joint initiative. Here is our collective report to you on the early stages of our efforts.

As previously reported in the this column, the group of local mayors has reactivated the Mid-Town Collaborative, mayors from around Greater Hartford who have come together to brainstorm and explore ways that we, as neighbors, can work together.

Over the past several months, we have been meeting to analyze

Courtesy photo

and initiate discussions about strategies that can assist our respective communities to achieve economic strength, as well as exploring how we might come together to share in ways that result in higher efficiency and cost savings in these difficult economic times.

Of particular focus has been an examination of topic areas that lend themselves to regional synergy with emphasis on road work, capital purchasing, streamlined services and collaborative dialogue on the needs of municipalities in light of the state government's budget challenges.

In addition to myself, the other participating mayors are Luke Bronin of Hartford, Roy Zartarian of Newington, Enzo Faienza of Cromwell, Mark Kaczynski of Berlin and Paul Montinieri of Wethersfield.

There has been some opportunity to review our thoughts and goals with state legislators Paul Doyle, John Fonfara, Tony Guerrera and Russ Morin, and U.S. Rep. John Larson. Their input has been valuable in shaping the scope and value of a cohesive and thoughtful effort to assist all six municipalities.

This initiative has yielded some dynamic and thoughtful dialogue and an enhanced understanding of the value of working more closely with our capital city, recognizing that a joint effort can be powerfully helpful for all.

Some examples of the dialogue direction include a recognition that sharing paving maps can be helpful in streamlining the unnecessary duplicate staging of resources and an assurance that connecting roads can be done intelligently. Secondly, the consideration of sharing purchase choices can assist with reducing costs when purchases are made in larger quantity. This continues to be a helpful examination.

Finally, the mayors invited the town managers to attend a joint meeting to digest our broad template and to provide some details to the mosaic, as well as a dose of administrative awareness and common sense. We look forward to continuing these exchanges and are confident that this initiative will yield some wonderful opportunities to share our strengths and brainstorm how mayors, working together, can provide a strength in numbers outcome.

Local news reporters have been paying some attention and will continue to publicize these efforts and assist the mayors' group in keeping our respective communities informed. It will also be a nice opportunity for residents to share their reactions as the word gets out about what we are working toward. **RHL**

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Touring the fire museum

Courtesy photos

Left: Spending time at the Rocky Hill Fire Museum are, from left, Joe Kochanek, Fran Palazolla, Jimmy Beeler Jr. and Dave Hawkins.

A group of local schoolchildren recently paid a visit to the Rocky Hill Fire Museum on Church Street as part of their series of field trips to locations such as town hall, the ferry landing, historical society and others. They had an opportunity to view up close this old Maxim fire engine.

Deputy Mayor Joe Kochanek, the former fire chief, talks about the apparatus and the rich history of the town's volunteer fire department.

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Honoring heroes

Town Council praises four for saving a woman's life

by Mark Jahne
Editor

When seconds count, whether someone lives or dies can be determined by who rushes to help, and how quickly and efficiently they spring into action.

Thanks to a quick response by three local police officers and an off-duty nurse, Francine Lavigne-Teague of Rocky Hill is alive today. She's still recovering from her ordeal, but was healthy enough to attend the July 18 Town Council meeting to personally meet and thank those who turned a near-death experience into a happy ending.

Lavigne-Teague and her husband, William Teague, were driving along Cromwell Avenue near the intersection of West Street April 29 on their way to the bank when she suddenly slumped over, unresponsive, in the passenger seat. In front of them was a police cruiser driven by Officer Cherie Dery, and Teague was able to capture her attention.

As this was happening, Evanna Burgwardt, a registered nurse who had stopped for coffee at Starbucks, saw the commotion and raced to assist. She quickly surmised the woman had experienced a heart attack.

She removed Lavigne-Teague from the car and immediately began cardio-pulmonary resuscitation while Dery hooked up an automated external defibrillator, part of the equipment carried in police vehicles.

Sgt. Joseph Phelps and Officer Jon Lammers raced to the scene as well, and all four played a role in restoring the woman's heartbeat and getting her aboard an ambulance for further treatment at the hospital.

A passing physician also stopped his car and ran over to offer his assistance. It was several moments before Dr. Kent Burgwardt discovered his daughter was the nurse administering the CPR.

"I was gone – no pulse, no heartbeat. They brought me back," Lavigne-Teague said. "I'm so thankful."

She said she was in the hospital intensive care unit under heavy sedation for five days, followed by time in a rehabilitation hospital. She has no memory of those days or of her life-altering event.

Police Chief Michael Custer praised Evanna Burgwardt for helping without hesitation and said it is an example of the good that can take place when police and citizens work together.

"It is such a breath of fresh air to have someone like yourself come to the aid of the police," he said to her.

The nurse received a Good Samaritan Award and the three officers were given Distinguished Service Awards.

"I hope you are as proud of these folks and our town as the Rocky Hill Town Council is," Mayor Claudia Baio said.

Evanna Burgwardt was raised in town and now resides in Cromwell. She's happy Lavigne-Teague is alive but doesn't regard her actions that fateful day as anything special.

Photo by Mark Jahne

For saving the life of heart attack victim Francine Lavigne-Teague, three Rocky Hill police officers and a private citizen were honored by the Town Council. From left: Sgt. Joseph Phelps, Officer Cherie Dery, Officer Jon Lammers, nurse Evanna Burgwardt, Lavigne-Teague, Mayor Claudia Baio and Police Chief Michael Custer

"I was gone – no pulse, no heartbeat. They brought me back."

–Francine Lavigne-Teague

She is employed full time in the cardiac intensive care center at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford and also works on a per diem basis in the emergency department at St. Mary's Hospital in Waterbury.

"I started in the ER and I moved to the ICU six months ago," she said. "I don't feel like it's that big of a deal. … I was doing what I was trained to do."

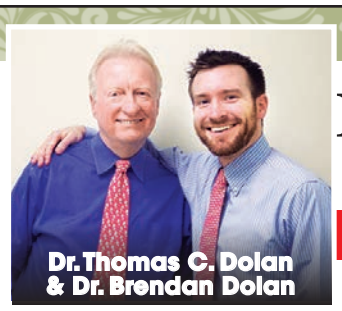
She did admit that it was a thrill to see Lavigne-Teague healthy and be able to speak with her.

"In the ER, you never see what becomes of the patients," Burgwardt said.

Custer pointed out that the honors for Phelps, Lammers and Dery come at a time when police around the country are reeling from fellow officers being shot and killed in Texas and Louisiana. He reported that the police department is receiving unprecedented recognition from the public it serves.

"We have seen an outpouring of support and love from our community," he said. "It reminds us that most people do support us."

Many residents, he added, have brought cards, flowers and food to police headquarters. He said the men and women in uniform greatly appreciate this. **RHL**



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The Old Wethersfield Country Store is selling over the shoulder tote bags useful for carrying things in for a trip to the beach, picnic or for other travels this summer. There are two different designs on front of the off-white cotton bags. The first has bees holding coffee cups and the molecular formula of coffee printed in yellow behind the bees and the second design is of a red chicken with black sunglasses. The bags are made by HicksterTees and cost $20 at the store location at 221 Main St. in Wethersfield.

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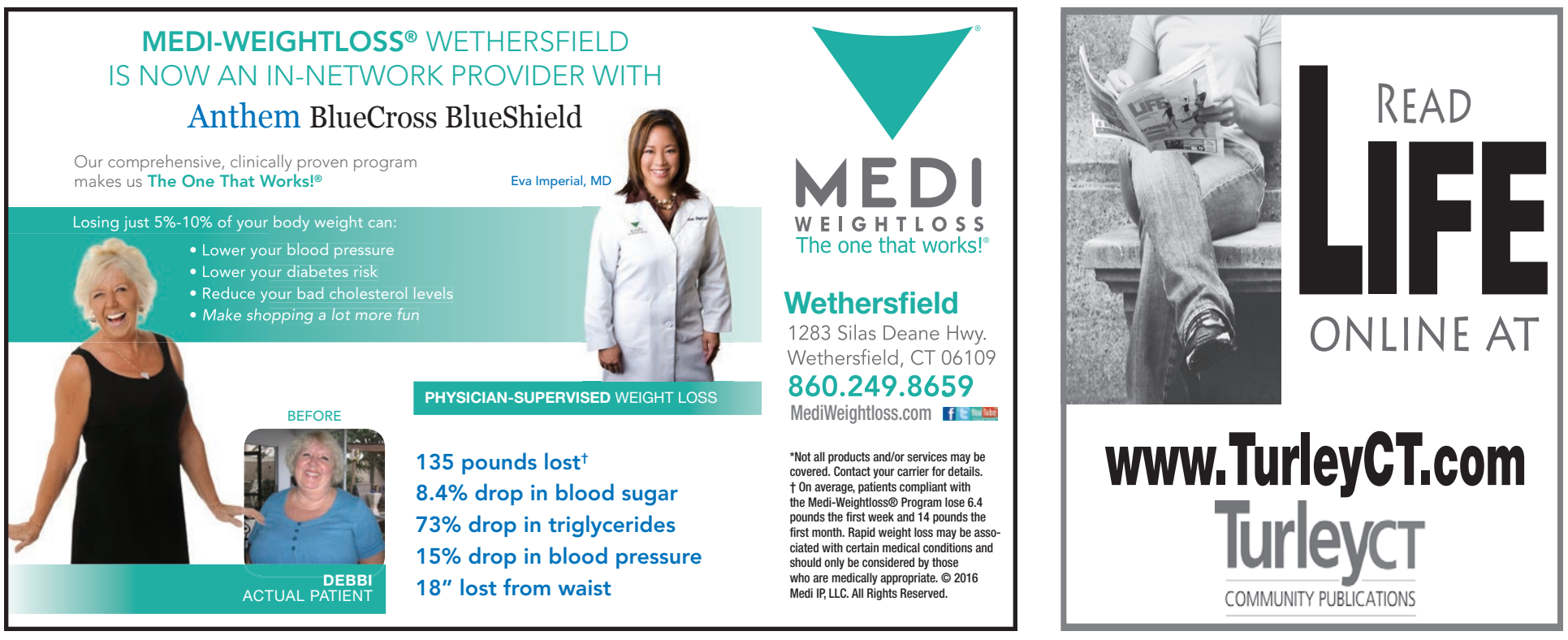
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LIVING Your Best LIFE

Busy as ever

Carmela Bucchi leads an active and fulfilling life

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Photo by Mark Jahne

Carmela "Millie" Bucchi is leading an active life in her 80s. She lives at Atria Greenridge Place in town and is shown with Katie Lee, the facility's engage life director.

Carmela "Millie" Bucchi sees no reason to slow down just because she is an octogenarian. She has made the necessary concessions to age, but remains active and engaged in her daily life.

Bucchi, 83, is a resident at Atria Greenridge Place, an independent and assisted living community off Maple Street. It also offers memory care in a separate and secured area.

Formerly of Berlin, she first came to Atria eight months ago when her husband was admitted to its memory care unit. Bucchi lived elsewhere in the building and was able to visit with him every day while she was also receiving physical therapy to recover from a fall. He now lives in an Alzheimer's disease facility in Southington.

She takes advantage of the Atria shuttle bus to visit him twice a week and also goes on the weekend with her two daughters who live locally. She has a car and drives short distances for shopping and other purposes.

She purchased a small condominium in town and the plan was that she would leave Atria and move into that private home when her husband was transferred. But she quickly determined that she wanted to stay.

"I approach each day happy. I feel light-hearted now."
– Carmela "Millie" Bucchi

Her children brought the furniture from her home to Atria to provide familiar surroundings. It made her decision easier.

"That's when I started feeling at home," Bucchi said.

"I enjoy meeting people. At first, I did not want to go on

any of the trips, but now I do every Wednesday."

She also enjoys the various entertainment provided in house. On this particular day they had a luncheon program about Italy, with food to match.

Bucchi doesn't know what the future holds but she expects it will be a long one, if family history is any indication.

"My mother lived to be 103. I approach each day happy. I feel light-hearted now," she said.

She has three children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, with a third on the way. Christmas and Easter are her favorite holidays. Her newest interests are knitting and crocheting.

She helped Lee turn a dormant plot of land into a community garden. Bucchi enjoys playing bingo and had a delightful time on a recent trip to see a show at Goodspeed Opera House.

"She's one of our more vibrant residents," said Katie Lee, Atria's engage life director. "She attends almost every out-trip."

Lee said Bucchi is always looking to learn new things. She makes a point of welcoming new residents and offers her companionship.

"She's an asset in every way. If she sees someone sitting alone, she will go to that table," Lee said.

"I wouldn't like to sit by myself," Bucchi said.

"I'm very fond of her," Lee added.

She called Bucchi a wonderful ambassador for the entire Atria Greenridge Place community. **RHL**

The art of making *new friends* over 50

Friendships are good for your health. People who have close friends and confidants live longer than those who don't, according to an Australian study. The researchers even found that those with the largest number of friends survived the longest.

So how do you start? Here are a few tips for striking up a friendship when you're over 50.

Take possession of a place. Doing so both mentally and physically will make that space more personal.

Put yourself forward. The key to starting a friendship often means putting yourself out there first and not waiting for people to come to you.

Embrace relationships with both genders. Older people have more freedom to have those relationships without all the complications they had in their youth.

Reach out to people who are new to the community. This can be the key to a new relationship.

Put yourself out there. There are many ways to open the doors to friendships by simply getting out. **RHL**

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LIVING Your Best LIFE

LIFE stopped in at area senior centers and asked the question:

What's surprised you the most about the aging process?

"Having trouble walking and you have to be very careful so you don't fall."
–*Helene Perzaowski, 94, Farmington*

"All the technology is over-whelming to someone like me because when I was in high school, computer classes were just beginning."
–*Barbara Kaczenski, 61, Bristol*

"The inability to think straight."
–*Marge Sebastian, Bristol*

"People are very busy when they get older. There are things you don't think about that need doing. … There's never enough time in the day. There's always something to do."
–*Cliff Dudley, 70, Avon*

"I'm surprised I still have good health after seeing how many of my high school classmates have passed away."
–*Russell Tuller, 72, Granby*

"I haven't had too many surprises except that I can't pick up [heavy] things the way I used to."
–*Elinor Warner, 88, Simsbury*

"I just knew [aging] was a part of life. Working and walking has kept me doing the best I can."
–*Bill Glynn, 90, Wethersfield*

"You can survive cancer."
–*Albertine Moura, 78, Wethersfield*

"The aches and pains; realizing you can't do what you did 15 or 20 years ago."
–*Julian Radziszewski, 62, New Britain*

"Our money runs out."
–*Bernie Ward, Glastonbury*

"Just realizing that having family – children and a husband – is so wonderful and enjoyable. They make life so worthwhile."
–*Althea Heacock, Glastonbury*

"I'm surprised at how still young-at-heart I am and how hard I still play, but I'm also surprised at how age catches up to you, how every day something surprises you … how things change."
–*Jeff Wassell, 68, Hebron*

"It sneaks up so gradually, you don't know you're getting older."
–*Gladys Kitchens, 93, Rocky Hill*

"As soon as I hit 80, I suddenly realized, 'Gee, I've gotten older. How did I get to be that old?' I don't feel any different."
–*Gertrude Gosselin, 80, Canton*

"What surprised me, personally, is this 30-year-old mind is still alive in this 78-year-old body."
–*Wanda Colman, 78, Tarriffville*

"I always had an expectation that I would someday make a major, positive change in the world. And looking back now, time's running out."
–*Jerry Lintner, 72, Simsbury*

"You look at your mother and your grandmother – I remember my mother was old, my grandmother was ancient and I was young – and now I'm the matriarch and I'm the elder."
–*Linda Rybacki, 75, Simsbury*

"When I was 20, everyone would listen to what I said, but I knew nothing. Today, I know, but ain't nobody listening."
–*James Diamond, 66, West Hartford*

"I'm loving my aging process. I feel better about myself now as a 55-year-old woman than I have at any other time in my life."
–*Nanci Wylde, 55, West Hartford*

"I think you mellow out. Things that might have bothered you before don't bother you now. I used to worry about what people think."
–*Paul Morline, 71, Rocky Hill*

"Nothing really has surprised me as much as your body changes but your mind doesn't. My brain and thinking process is just as sharp as it always was. Your brain doesn't get old. The Veterans Administration in Newington and West Haven has helped me greatly."
–*Rob Stavnezer, 72, West Hartford*

"It's easier than I thought. I exercise. I walk. I eat healthy. So that's probably why I don't feel my age at all."
–*Anne Fitzpatrick, 57, West Hartford*

"You have to learn to accept limitations. Things change. You have to go with it. Keep your sense of humor."
–*Susan Fellman, 75, West Hartford*

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Movies about senior citizens

Grumpy Old Men, 1993:
Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau
A lifelong feud is worsened when a young woman moves into the neighborhood.

On Golden Pond, 1981:
Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn
Couple agrees to take care of their estranged daughter's boyfriend's son.

Driving Miss Daisy, 1989:
Morgan Freeman and Jessica Tandy
Story of an older woman and her African-American chauffeur in the American South.

Harold and Maude, 1971:
Ruth Gordon
Harold is changed forever when he meets Maude, a lively 70-something.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2011:
Judi Dench, Bill Nighy, Maggie Smith and Tom Wilkinson
British retirees head to India to live in a run-down hotel.

Cocoon, 1985, and Cocoon: The Return, 1988
Seniors swim in a pool with alien cocoons, then in the sequel have to decide whether to stay on Earth or return to the place where nobody ages.

The Sunshine Boys, 1975:
Walter Matthau and George Burns
Vaudeville duo agree to get back together for a television special and then discover they can't stand each other any more.

Going in Style, 1979:
Beau Burns, Art Carney and Lee Strasberg
Three men who need money decide to plan a bank robbery.

About Schmidt, 2002:
Jack Nicholson
Newly retired man travels to his estranged daughter's wedding.

Away from Her, 2006:
Julie Christie and Michael Murphy
Alzheimer's disease and romantic triangle in a nursing home.

The Bucket List, 2007:
Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman
Two terminally ill men head out to fulfill their list of things to do before they die.

Amour, 2012:
Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva
Older couple, retired music teachers, find their life changed when the wife has a stroke.

Freezer Geezers, 2009:
Documentary about a team competing in the 75 and older division of a hockey tournament.

Is Anybody There?, 2008:
Michael Caine
Young boy in England meets a retired magician in the nursing home his parents run.

Ladies in Lavender, 2004:
Maggie Smith and Judi Dench
Sisters meet a young mysterious foreigner on the beach in 1930s Cornwall.

Quartet, 2012:
Maggie Smith, Tom Courtenay, Pauline Collins and Billy Connolly
Comedy/drama set at a home for retired musicians.

Still Mine, 2013:
James Cromwell and Geneviève Bujold
Elderly couple fights to build a home in New Brunswick.

The Trip to Bountiful, 1985:
Geraldine Page and John Heard
Elderly woman wants to visit her childhood home in Texas in the 1940s.

Up, 2009:
Animated story of 78-year old and a young stowaway.

Young@Heart, 2007:
Documentary about a chorus of senior citizens from Massachusetts who cover songs by rockers like Jimi Hendrix.
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Melanie Cherniack has written a number of books for children and adults.

Courtesy photos

Embracing life's imperfections

Melanie Cherniack is a blogger and an author

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Despite her multiple books and two blogs, Melanie Cherniack still hesitates to call herself a writer.

After raising two daughters as a stay-at-home mother who sometimes worked in floral design, the Rocky Hill native is finding her voice.

She has two blogs. The first, under the name "Modern Melly," explores such topics as parenting, marriage, current topics and being a police wife. Married to long-time police officer Paul, she also has a second website, "My Blue Family Magazine Online," which is for and by police families, with news and stories that affect the law enforcement community.

"I was pretty much a classic introvert. I always had my nose in a book. [I enjoyed] anything creative: writing, drawing, art, any of that stuff," Cherniack said.

"I was a marginal student at best. The one area I always excelled in was English. When I was a kid, I'd write little stories all the time. I wouldn't even show them to anyone. I'd say, 'I'd love to write a book one day. I'd love to write a book one day.' After I got divorced, I really started thinking there's no reason not to do it," she added.

"Self-publishing makes it so easy, so accessible and budget friendly. I have a history of starting things and not finishing them. This was a goal I needed to prove to myself I can finish something."

Cherniack, who now lives in Wethersfield, decided to start with a children's book that she self-published.

"It's print-on-demand. I like that. I didn't want to buy a whole bunch of my own books and watch them collect dust. I had friends who said, 'This is great. You have to go to a publisher in this.' The fact of the matter is the children's book market is completely saturated," she said.

"They won't look at an unknown author unless your name is Jimmy Fallon. There are 32 million books on Amazon. It's hard for a publisher to look at an unknown [author]," she added.

"When I can't say something, I can write it. There's a release in that."
– Melanie Cherniack

Despite her lack of experience, Cherniack quickly got into the swing of things.

"The children's books, the first one was literally the easiest. It seems like everything I write starts with a sentence in my head. I wake up with it in the morning and it starts from there. It's almost tunnel vision; it's surprisingly simple," she said.

Her first book was "Look Outside Your Window."

"It has big large print and bold pictures. 'Look outside your window; tell me what you see.' I was a daydreamer. My bed was turned to the window. That's where the memory came from. It became the book," she said.

In addition to writing, she also illustrated the book.

"That's terrifying when you're not really an artist. At some point I would like to revisit them and rerelease them. In just the couple of years I've been doing this, I've learned so much more," Cherniack said.

She's written several children's books. One, "Ella and Her Rainbrella," was inspired by a girl she knows.

"I was actually inspired by a little girl I take care of. Instead of saying umbrella, she would say 'rainbrella.' She was walking in the house saying, 'I'm walking with my rainbrella.' I said that's a story," Cherniack recalled.

Despite writing several more children's books, she still felt as though she needed to do more, so in December 2015 she self-published "Into the Everwood," a coming-of-age, modern-day fairy tale.

"It was, first of all, a self-confidence thing. My husband is very encouraging. He said, 'Just do it.' I had this idea in my head, the frame of a story I knew I wanted to tell, but the concept of writing a novel, a full book with pages and pages of words that made sense was daunting," she said.

"I literally sat down on a rainy Sunday morning. I had a sentence in my head and I think I was writing until almost 8 o'clock at night. I had the thought that I wasn't going to look at it, I wasn't going to read it until it was done. I just wrote it straight through, like 394 pages. It was over several months, about six months.

"I had to force myself to sit down and commit to spending the time focused and writing. It told itself. I had no idea where the story was going until it got there. It was fun and terrifying and exhilarating," Cherniack said.

Local readers will be able to identify disguised landmarks, such as the fictional Rocky Knoll, in the book.

"This is the setting I know, this is the atmosphere I know, these are the dreams I had as a child," she said of modeling the town after Rocky Hill.

"It's a central location where everything goes from. Everyone is loosely based on a compilation of people. I pay homage to my high school English teacher. Mr. [William] McMahon was one of the best teachers I had. He was so influential."

In April of 2016, she published her second novel, "Livvy Takes the Long Way," which is a women's contemporary work of fiction, under the pen name Elsa Kurt, her grandparents' first names.

"I always loved my grandmother's name. I loved the way my grandfather said my grandmother's

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name. I feel like they're keeping an eye on me. Every time right before I publish, I have a dream about them," she said.

That's the tipoff, that it's OK to do it. That's my clue. They were massively influential in my life. I wanted to pay a tribute to them."

While her books aren't autobiographical, Cherniack said they're still revealing.

"It's so exposing in a way. It's not my life, it's not my story, but there are certainly factions that resemble events in my life. You're giving people such a window into yourself. So I struggled with releasing that," she said.

"I asked the universe, if this is something to put out there, you have to give me a sign. It took several months before I got the sign I asked for. I specifically asked for a red dragonfly because I thought it would be a weird request.

"I was reading a children's story, and on the last page, there was a bright red dragonfly. I went OK, I'm taking it. I'm big on looking for signs and going with that the rest take care of itself."

She's now working on a sequel to "Into the Everwood."

"I have always known Melanie to be very creative. She is a wonderful artist and can paint beautiful paintings. She is amazing with flower arrangement, too. She can really make anything pretty. As a writer, she shows such talent," Jennifer Petrozza of Newington said.

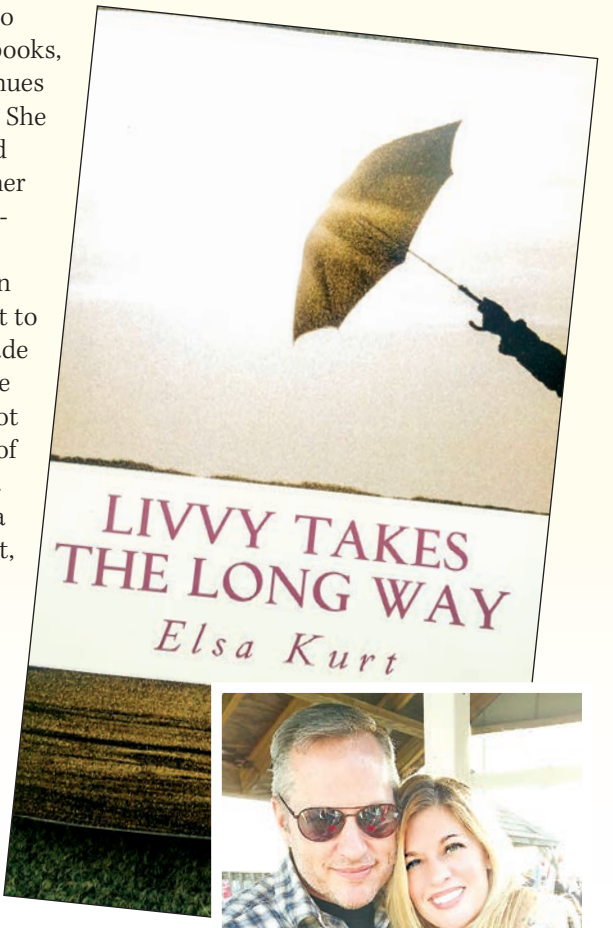
"I love reading her blogs. She can be funny and serious in her writing, and puts love in everything she creates. She puts a piece of her heart and soul in all of her work."

The two have known each other for 15 years from when their children were in elementary school together.

"My favorite book, even though I love them all, would have to be 'Livvy Takes the Long Way.' I think women can relate to the story. It is so well-written. It seems very real and honest. Melanie is a truly gifted, wonderful woman and I can't wait to read her next piece of work," Petrozza said.

In addition to working on her books, Cherniack continues to blog regularly. She originally started that because of her husband's profession.

"His devotion and commitment to what he does made me very defensive and protective not only of him, but of police in general. When you're on a different side of it, when you know the people and know their heart, I wanted to be an advocate for them," she said.



"That was some of the early blogging work. I wanted people to understand these are human beings with families and hearts and children who took on this job to help people and be a part of something greater than themselves. I think I wanted to add my voice to it," she added.

From there, the blog took off.

"Then I got a big mouth. I had something to say about everything," she joked.

"It's incredibly varied. It's kind of whatever strikes me. One of the recurring themes is about young women and girls. I think about how I was just a little tight little ball of anxiety. I don't want anyone to feel that, the self-doubt, the self-consciousness I grew up with."

She usually blogs each week, sometimes sharing posts she's read. In addition to writing, she's also trying to promote her works, such as a reading at the Cora J. Belden Library in Rocky Hill.

"That's the hardest part, particularly as an introvert. I was able to read my book to the kids and that was terrifying and great. It was a really nice experience," Cherniack said.

She's active on social media.

"Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, whatever it is, I'm probably doing it."

Melanie Cherniack started blogging to show support for her husband Paul, a police officer.

She wants to use her books to express herself and also to bring people together.

"I'm a terrible speaker. I get tongue-tied. I'm uncomfortable. Something happens when I put things to print. I become more articulate, more witty, more confident. When I can't say something, I can write it. There's a release in that," she said.

"We have all these common things. I don't know if I realized before I was writing how much we have in common. Being relatable is a big deal to me. Embrace the imperfections of life. All the false starts and mistakes and stumbles are so relatable." **RHL**

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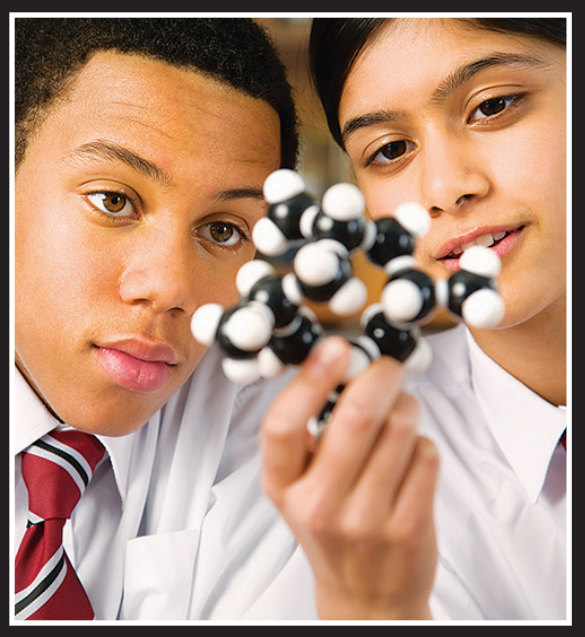

SCHOOL

August 2016

A unique offering

Area high school courses go beyond math and history

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

There are classes offered and taken at nearly every high school in the country – English, history, science, and algebra...but with a diversifying student population, many schools, including schools throughout Connecticut, are taking the opportunity to offer a variety of unique courses.

At Hall High School in West Hartford, many of those core subjects now have specialized classes for upperclassmen to explore.

"In our English classes, we are offering women's literature, with one course called 'Breaking the

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Silence,' which is classical feminist, and one that's new this year called 'Redefining the Roles,' which provides an evolutionary study of the roles of women in society," Hall High School Assistant Principal John Guidry said. "We also offer history of modern Warfare, which many students really adore."

New this coming year at Hall High School will also be an addition to the school's foreign language department classes in American Sign Language.

"They'll be not only learning the language, but exploring the American Deaf culture and history," Guidry said.

According to Guidry, there has been a push to include ASL as a foreign language at the school for several years, both at the administrative and student level.

"We have rich resources right here in West Hartford," he said. "You see increasingly in the world that that is considered to be a bonafide foreign language."

The language will be open to students in grades nine through 12 in what Guidry said will be an immersive experience with a new teacher who is part of the deaf community. Close to 50 students have already registered for the course for the coming year.

"The students are clamoring for it," Guidry said.

This offering is especially exciting for Guidry because he said it opens opportunities for students to learn not just a language but an entire culture to which they may not have been previously exposed.

"The deaf community is a subculture that exists among us in every location. There are other types of subcultures, but most of them tend to be somewhat geographically restricted. The deaf subculture is not," he said. "It's my personal opinion that it's a subculture that flies below the radar, and people often don't think about it as a subculture."

In addition to exposing students to new cultures, other unique classes in the area are aimed at exposing students to new skills. Simsbury High School will be offering a new course this coming year on fashion design.

"We've piloted this in the summer arts program where students are actually making dresses and other clothing, and it's been very successful," Simsbury High School Principal Andrew O'Brien said.

After seeing what he called a "groundswell of interest" from the summer program, O'Brien said the course was further developed as an elective for students at the high school.

"Along with learning the actual fashion design, they get to learn about the industry and the use of different materials," he said.

"For one project, students would choose a celebrity and they would research their style, their body type,

all that, then, ultimately, they created these outfits."

In addition to teaching students about a previously unexplored area, O'Brien said this class also gives them the opportunity to be creative.

"We had one girl who made an outfit entirely out of Starburst wrappers that were all braided together," he said.

While the summer program primarily focused on women's fashion, the course at the high school will branch into menswear as well.

"It's not only an interesting course for students, but it's a marketable skill as well," O'Brien said.

Providing those marketable skills is a large piece of the push behind courses at Newington High School as well. There, the culinary program has expanded to provide students with real-world kitchen and restaurant experience.

"This is not Home Ec. This is a restaurant atmosphere with catering services," culinary teacher Scott Pestka said. "I teach the kids how

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Back to School

to smoke their own meat. ...That kind of stuff isn't taught in Home Ec."

The program is part of Newington High School's Culinary Arts Academy, which will be entering its third year this fall. The academy offers courses ranging from Introduction to Cooking to Event Planning to Restaurant Management.

In addition to learning in the classroom, students in these courses get hands-on experience in the food service industry, as the class doubles as a catering service for both school members and the community at large.

Students create daily sandwiches and baked goods that are available for teachers and fellow students to buy as well as working a catering event two to three times per month. In the spring, the culinary students catered the State of the Town dinner as well as the high school football team's banquet with more than 150 people.

As the culinary teacher, Pestka runs his classroom like a restaurant kitchen and demands only the highest quality.

"I always tell the kids, we have to sell quality. There will be times where I look at it and it doesn't look perfect, and they'll take them all apart and redo their chef salad because I wasn't going to sell poor quality," Pestka said. "I'll put my wraps and salads up against anybody any day."

He credits much of the success of the culinary program with the facilities they are able to use, including industrial refrigerators, smokers and ovens.

In Rocky Hill, having the best facilities is possible through a multi-year renovation that has been happening at the high school. One of the most popular classes at Rocky Hill High School is photography.

"We still run it in the traditional sense of the word," Principal Mario Almeida said.

The school has had a dark room for photography and ensured that the space would not be lost in the renovation.

"This year, we have a brand new dark room," Almeida said. "When the school was renovating, we decided it was important enough to make sure it was included."

Almeida said photography remains one of the most popular electives and regularly fills up.

Despite changes in technology, Almeida, and many students with whom he has spoken, has said understanding film development at its basic form is crucial to understanding photography in general.

"I think our students today are so caught up with modern day technology, with Photoshop and digital media, that I think it's important to understand how black and white film development works," he said.

"Many times we thought of changing it to more of a modern, digital photography, but even the kids will tell you that understanding the black and white photography helps them with their digital work."

Through the class, many students have come to find a passion for traditional photography and shown a great deal of talent in the medium, Almeida said.

"One of the units they do is portraits, and they learn how the right background, the right light, the right shading, all of it makes for a better photo," he said. "It's very different than taking a picture with a digital camera and being able to alter it all after."

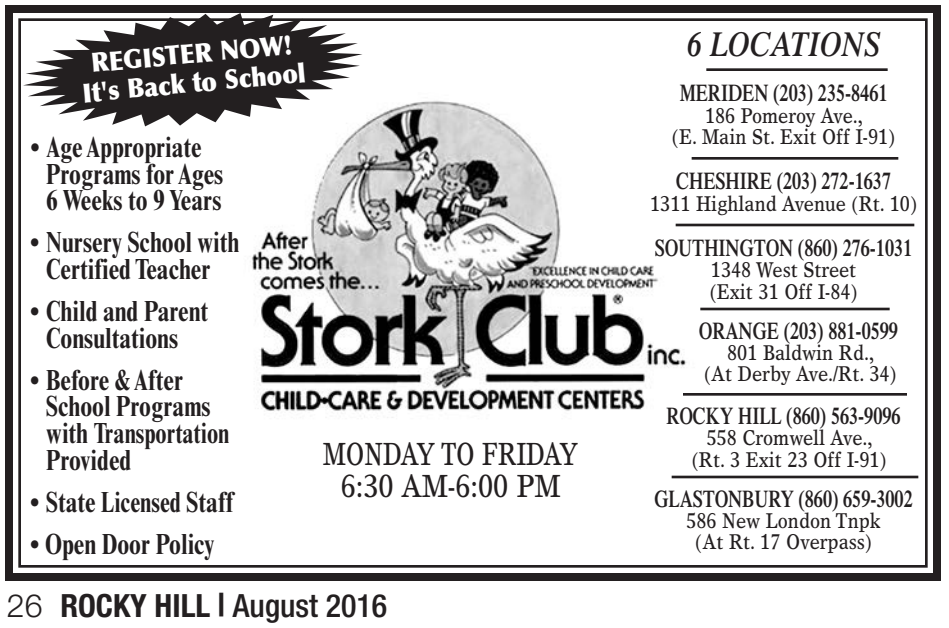
In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning.

"It's about exposing them to something new," O'Brien said, "and our kids our thriving." RHL

In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning:

"It's about exposing them to something new, and our kids our thriving."

– Andrew O'Brien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558 Cromwell Ave.,
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GLASTONBURY (860) 659-3002
586 New London Tnpk
(At Rt. 17 Overpass)

Preparing for a *multicultural* world

Students offered more options when studying world language

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

In an increasingly multicultural world, it's important for students to be given the opportunity to learn another language – or two – at school.

Students are often able to choose from a variety of options, with some districts offering five or more languages.

Simsbury offers classes in Chinese, French, Latin or Spanish. West Hartford currently teaches five and will be adding a sixth – American Sign Language – in the fall.

Newington provides students with a choice between Spanish, Italian and French, with Wethersfield providing the same options.

Glastonbury offers six – Spanish, Russian, French, Chinese, Latin and Greek. Rocky Hill students can learn French, Latin, Italian or Spanish.

Spanish and French remain popular offerings in most districts. Erin Murray, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning in Simsbury, said students in her district select a language in seventh grade after they all begin with Spanish in fifth grade.

West Hartford world language coordinators Elena Sada and Lucy Cartland said the popularity of Spanish is evident due to the fact that it is the predominant second language in the United States.

"In West Hartford, like in most regions of the country, Spanish is the most widely-spoken language among bilingual and multilingual populations and is the language of the largest percentage of West Hartford immigrants," Sada wrote in an email.

Spanish is the most popular language at Newington High School, according to Rossanna Vassal, coordinator of world language for Newington Public Schools. It is the only language offered in middle school, so most students will continue to study it once they move on to high school. It is the only language in which students will be able to take an Advanced Placement class.

"Many of our students – and parents – will argue that Spanish will be the most useful language to learn," she said.

Rita Oleksak, director of foreign language for Glastonbury Public

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Back to School

Schools, said Spanish remains the most popular of the six languages offered "by sheer number of students."

Wethersfield students can start studying a world language beginning in seventh grade. Sally Dastoli, director of curriculum and instruction for Wethersfield Public Schools, said Spanish is what most students opt to take.

Many districts are noticing an increase in the number of students choosing to take French.

"French has slowly crept up on Spanish," Murray said. "Some other school districts are eliminating those two languages; we have added teachers and sections."

She believes the growing number of students who choose French is due to the fact that a few years ago, Simsbury offered full-year French to seventh-graders, which was not the case for several years prior; they could take a full year only in grade eight.

"It was very difficult for students to change languages between grade seven and eight, and typically made the change when they arrived at SHS," Murray said. "Therefore, with full year choices made available in grade seven, we are seeing a larger enrollment in French."

Sada and Cartland said French-speaking markets account for five times more business than any other markets, and the largest customer in Connecticut for its products and services is France, followed by Quebec.

"Perhaps our residents are motivated ... by the beauty of French when they choose to study it in our schools," Sada said.

The two most popular languages in Rocky Hill are Spanish and French, according to Kathleen Lessard, world language supervisor at Rocky Hill High School, with the latter on the rise.

"French enrollment has been increasing steadily in the last few years," she said. "As a French teacher in the district, this is very exciting."

With so many districts offering a wider option of languages, Oleksak said it would make sense for enrollment numbers to go down in a certain language, but she is pleased that "French numbers are holding their own."

Some districts in the state and

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Back to School

nationwide discontinued or de-prioritized Frenchprograms when adding in the option to take Chinese, but that is not the case in Glastonbury.

Oleksak believes the interest still exists for French because it is spoken in a variety of countries and settings.

The districts that offer Chinese are noticing a growing interest.

In Glastonbury, the number of enrolled students has increased by 20 for the upcoming school year.

Although Chinese sees lower enrollment numbers than other languages in Simsbury, Murray said students often stay until the AP level, giving it a high retention rate.

It will be expanded to the elementary school level via after school programs to give students a taste of the culture and language.

"The perception is that the language is difficult; however, we have strong teachers who attend methods conferences every year," she said. "Chinese teaching is evolving in this country, and the strategies for teaching a language that is radically different from our own are advancing rapidlyl."

With so many new options for world language classes, districts are still seeing interest in the ancient languages.

Oleksak said colleagues outside of Glastonbury are impressed upon learning that there are three full-time Latin teachers in the district. West Hartford has a "small but solid demand" among students who want to take Latin or Ancient Greek, often because they wish to pursue a specialization in English or in the medical field.

"Contrary to popular belief, Latin and Ancient Greek are not dead languages; rather, they are the foundation of most common modern languages," Sada said.

"Studies have shown that the study of Latin and Ancient Greek increases English and other world language vocabulary dramatically. … Classic languages never die, since they are present in the foundations of all 'modern' languages."

Glastonbury has offered Russian to its students for almost 60 years and is back on an upswing, Oleksak said. It started in 1957, at the time of Sputnik, but she said Russian continues to be a critical need language.

It is offered through a grant from STARTALK, a program funded by the National Security Agency and administered by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

One of the program's aims is to increase the number of students enrolled in the study of critical-need languages based on national security concerns and global economic competitiveness.

Regardless of what languages are offered in a given district, many are expanding the availability into younger grades or making world language a requirement for graduation.

In Wethersfield, starting with the graduating class of 2020, earning two credits in a world language is now a graduation requirement, Dastoli said.

"We are excited about this new graduation requirement, as the acquisition of a second or third language correlates with a higher academic achievement, benefits the development of different cognitive abilities and helps students develop a more positive attitude towards different cultures," she said.

"Being proficient in a second or third language is an amazing skill for our graduates to use in their future careers."

World language classes are electives at Glastonbury High School, yet 96 percent of the students study at least one language, while 15 percent study two and 10 percent study three.

"It's not important which language you study – it's important that you study a language," Oleksak said. **RHL**

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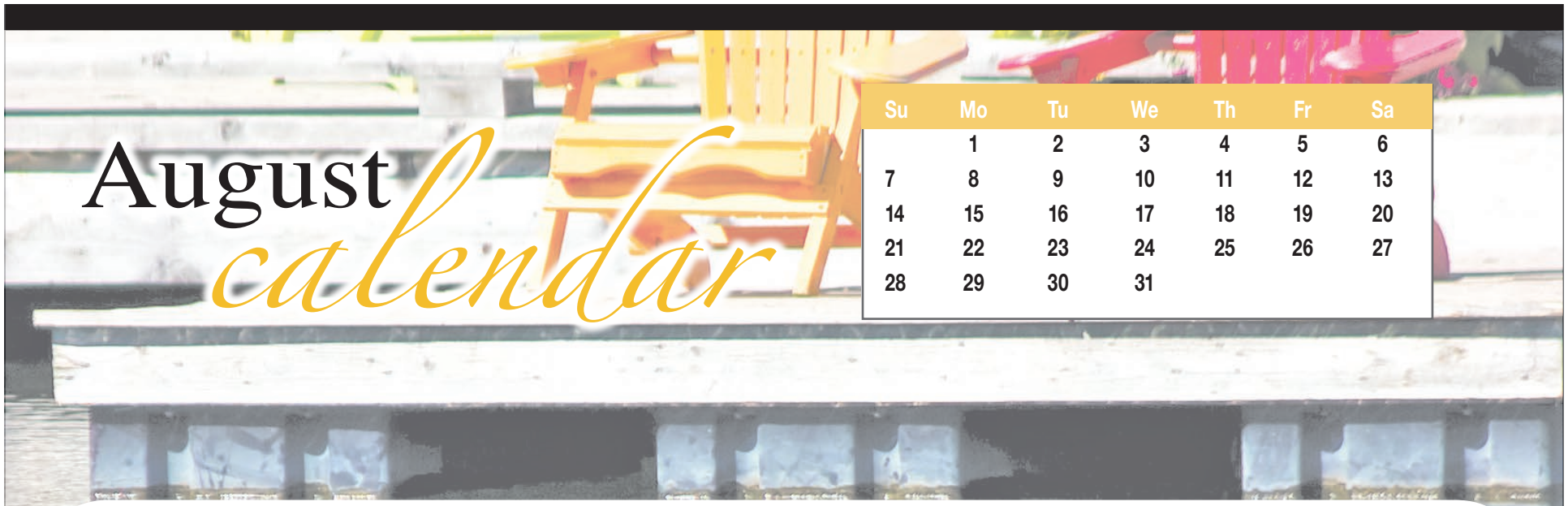

August calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

1 **SCORE Small Business Counseling,** 12:30-4:30 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Preschool Power: Mixed Ages Story Time, 6:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 8 and 15

2 **Knitting Group,** 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 9, 16, 23 and 30

Maker Camp: Rainbow Spectroscope, 3 p.m., for grades 4-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Crafter Camp for Teens: Emoji Magnets, 5:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

CT Hearing Voices Network support group, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805-817 Old Main St., second floor classroom, 203-391-4968, also Aug. 9, 16, 23 and 30

3 **Playgroup Plus**, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 10, 17, 24 and 31

Crafter Camp for Adults: Painted Coasters, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Kids Get Cooking, 6:15 p.m., for grades K-3, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 10

Mystery Book Discussion, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

4 **La Leche League,** 10 a.m. to noon, 23 Textbook Ave., 860-529-2307 or mgubala@sbcglobal.net

Preschool Power: Mixed Ages Story Time, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 11

ESL Classes, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 11, 18 and 25

Family Movie, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 11 and 25

Minecraft Club, 4 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 11, 18 and 25

Minecraft Club, 5:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 11, 18 and 25

Family Make It, Take It, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 11, 18 and 25

Quarry Roundtable, 6:30 p.m., Academy Hall Museum, 785 Old Main St., 860-563-6704 or rhhistory.org

5 **Art Start,** 10:30 a.m., for ages 2 and older, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Teens Learn Computer Programming with Minecraft, Session 2, 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 12 and 19

9 **Maker Camp: Balloon Drums and 2 Penny Kazoo,** 3 p.m., for grades 4-8, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Isha Foundation Meditation, 6:30 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 30

10 **Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group,** 6 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

13 **Board Game Club**, 10 a.m., for grades 6-12 and adults, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 2 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

15 **Camp Rocks,** noon, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Aug. 16, 17, 18 and 19

16 **Kindergarten Welcome,** 6:15 p.m., community center, 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

19 **LEGO Free Play,** 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

20 **Isha Yoga for Beginners,** 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

23 **Indian Cooking with Madhu Gupta,** 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

31 **Freshman Orientation,** 8 a.m. to noon, Rocky Hill High School, 860-258-7701

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Business Notes

Rocco Sanzo of Rocky Hill was named to the NRT President's Council by **Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage** in Connecticut and Westchester County, N.Y. He is branch manager of the company's South Windsor office.

The following businesses are the winners of this year's Best of Rocky Hill Awards sponsored by the **Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce**: accountant/tax consultant, **Alpha Financial Group**; auto repair/care/sales, **Silas Deane Auto**; breakfast, **Town Line Diner**; clothing/consignment, **Consignment Originals**; child care provider, **KinderCare**; contractor/home improvement, **Lawlor Builders**; customer service, **Creative Hairstyling Salon**; dentist/oral surgeon, **Connecticut Family Dental**; dry cleaner/tailor, **Best Cleaners**; electrician, **Dana DePercio Electric**; entertainment/recreational, **BounceU of Rocky Hill**; eye care, **Rocky Hill Eye Associates**; financial institution, **Berkshire Bank**; grocery store/mini mart, **West Side Market;** happy hour/bar, **Asian Bistro**; fitness/health, **The Tennis and Fitness Center of Rocky Hill**; health care professional, **HealthSource of Rocky Hill;** holistic practice, **The Center for Massage and Holistic Therapy**; best hair salon, **Gugliotti Salon and Spa**; home and garden, **Bella Flora**; insurance agency, **GT Luczak Insurance and Investments**; landscaper/lawn care, **Sanzaro Landscaping**; law firm, **LeFoll and LeFoll Attorneys at Law**; nail salon, **Noble Nails and Spa**; pet care/veterinarian, **Animal Hospital of Rocky Hill**; plumber, **Central Connecticut Pipe Fitters;** restaurant, **DeNovellis Family Restaurant** and retirement/home care, **Atria Greenridge Place.**

Dawn Satagaj of **William Raveis Real Estate, Mortgage & Insurance,** was named to the Chairman's Club for being among the company's Top 200 producers.

She also received awards for being the number six agent in Connecticut for closed units, top listing, selling and producing agent, and number one in Rocky Hill. **RHL**

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People notes

Hannah Rowland, a student at Kingswood Oxford School, is one of 11 students in its middle school to be named a Google Ninja and teaches technology to the school community.

Carlota Grate was named to the advisory council of the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants.

The following residents graduated from the University of Connecticut: **Mary Margaret Aylward,** B.A., mathematics/actuarial science; **Yasir Aziz,** B.S., biological sciences; **Alexandra Baranski,** B.S., special education; **Rose Calvo,** B.S., nursing, **Almira Cecunjanin,** doctor of pharmacy; **Mariamma Chaluparambil,** B.S., molecular and cell biology; **Samir Chaudry**, B.S., molecular and cell biology; **Henry Conkeyiv,** B.A., sociology; **Erica Curtin,** B.S., marketing; **Benjamin Cusick**, B.S., materials science and engineering; **Ankoor Desai,** B.A., political science; **Derrianna Fitzgerald,** B.S., accounting; **Paul Gallo Jr.,** B.S., resource economics; **Geri Gonxhe,** BSE, mechanical engineering; **Robert Greco Jr.,** B.S., ecology and evolutionary biology; **Andrew Harshaw,** B.A., political science; **Daniel Katz,** B.S., horticulture; **Patrick Kirtland**, B.A., communication; **Andrew Kohanski,** B.M., music; **Paige Kolakowski,** B.A., classics and ancient Mediterranean studies; **Sameer Laul,** B.S., molecular and cell biology; **Julie Lecco**, B.S., biological sciences; **Lin Chiaching,** B.A., communication; **Caitlin Lurate,** doctor of pharmacy; **Andrus Maandi,** BSE, biomedical engineering; **Sarah Noreika,** B..S, nutritional sciences; **Brian Ott,** B.A., digital media and design; **Andrew Paluch**, BSE, chemical engineering; **Allison Saucier,** B.S., exercise science and **Alek Zalewski,** B.S., civil engineering;

Jennifer Faenza earned a bachelor of arts degree from Assumption College.

The following residents graduated from Eastern Connecticut State University: **Nicole Aseltine**, bachelor of science, biology; **Brittany Cardillo,** cum laude, bachelor of science, finance; **Giuliana D'Appollonio,** bachelor of science, business administration; **Kara Dotolo,** bachelor of science, communication; **Dylan Gunning,** bachelor of general studies, business administration; **Brandon Guyer,** bachelor of science, business administration; **Sarah Harder,** bachelor of science, business administration; **Jenna Luck,** magna cum laude, bachelor of science, business administration; **Kelly Murphy,** bachelor of science, business administration; **Alexander Nagler,** cum laude, bachelor of science, communication; **Kelsey Palazzo,** summa cum laude, bachelor of science, mathematics and elementary education and **Thomas Saunders,** bachelor of general studies; physical education studies.

Hannah Rowland

Brianna Calderon earned a B.S. degree in human development and family studies from the University of New Hampshire.

Cara Pizzo graduated from the University of New Haven with a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene.

Anthony Gallo earned a master of science degree in computer science from Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Kyle Wolf graduated cum laude from Sacred Heart University with a bachelor of science degree.

Ryan Joyce earned an A.S. degree in general studies from Tunxis Community College.

Amanda Sachs earned a certificate in dental assisting from Tunxis Community College.

Carolta Grate

Courtesy photos

Kelly Clancy was welcomed into Omicron Delta Kappa National Honor Society at Western New England University.

Jessica Greenspan and **David Katz**, students at Rocky Hill High School, were honored with the rest of the state's top scholar-athletes for 2016 by the Connecticut Association of Schools and Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference.

Evan Choquette, a computer science major at Western New England University, was a member of the team that took second place in the best exhibitor category at the 2016 Grinspoon Entrepreneurship Initiative Awards Banquet.

Jennifer Faenza received departmental awards for secondary education and mathematics at the 32nd Annual Honors Convocation at Assumption College.

Monica Jorge participated in the University of Findlay's Symposium for Scholarship and Creativity.

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Anthony Gallo was named to the NEWMAC Academic All-Conference team. He is a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a member of its men's track and field team.

Nicole Aseltine was inducted into the Eta Omega chapter of the Beta Beta Beta national biological honor society at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Hilda Agyapong, Brittany Cardillo, Antonio Carlone, Kevin Casasanta, Derek Costa, Alexander Fiducia, Hannah Garrahy, Leah Magnoli, Alexander Nagler, Kelsey Ott and Kelsey Palazzo were named to the dean's list at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Jessica Ptak was named to the president's list at Bryant University.

Thomas Kelly was named to the dean's list at Keene State College.

Taia Lionetti was named to the dean's list at Springfield College.

Evan Rankin, Emily Rose Siegel, Evan Menze, Christina Marie Bobbitt and John Larkin were named to the dean's list at the University of Rhode Island.

Tea Kokic, Elizabeth Leahy and Eileen Rodriguez were named to the dean's list at Lasell College.

Audrey Oliva was named to the dean's list at the University of Saint Joseph.

Ryan Oliva was named to the dean's list at the University of North Carolina-Asheville.

Sydney Greenspan was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi honor society at Ithaca College.

Dale Reese was named to the dean's list with high distinction at Grove City College.

Darren Nunes earned a master of science degree in power systems management from Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Paige Kolakowski was named to the dean's list at the University of Connecticut. She also earned a B.A. degree in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies.

Lynn Aureli was named to the dean's list at Quinnipiac University.

Steven Kolakowski was named to the dean's list at the University of Connecticut.

Justin Barron, an eighth grade student at Kingswood Oxford Middle School, is this year's recipient of the Annual Alumni Character Award.

Cameron Clarke, Jessie Canfield and Joseph Savage are the first three Rocky Hill residents to graduate from the Connecticut River Academy at Goodwin College.

Cameron Clarke, Jessie Canfield and Joseph Savage

Courtesy photo

Jennifer Inho was named to the dean's list at Quinnipiac University.

Kelly Clancy performed as Pilar in Western New England University's production of "Legally Blonde the Musical."

Dylan Gunning was named to the dean's list at Eastern Connecticut State University.

James Bondi was named to the dean's list at George Washington University. **RHL**

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Slice of LIFE

photos by Allie Rivera

Summer at the Library

Throughout the summer, the Cora J. Belden Library is offering a variety of activities and resources for children, teenagers and adults, including its popular Book Buddies series. Various local celebrities including school principals and other administrators read to students gathered under a tree outside the library. Inside, children are playing with computer games and model trains and reading books. **1.** Siblings Mia, 6, and Vincenzo Ferreira, 4, listened intently as they ate their lunch during Book Buddies. **2.** Supervisor of Special Education Joan Gilbert, left, and Director of Special Education and Pupil Services Cathryn Riggs choose to read books that highlight people with disabilities. **3.** The library has jumped on the Pokemon Go craze. The building serves as both a "gym" and a "Pokestop" for players of the digital game, which encourages walking around known areas to catch digital creatures. **4.** Six-year-olds Soubi Venkadesan, left, and Arpitha Unnikrishman share a blanket. **5.** Twins Alyssa and Xander Alamo, 8, played games on the computer. **6.** Book Buddies is a popular children's program at the library. After hearing from a guest reader, children split into groups to read together, the older ones typically helping the younger. **7.** Children's Librarian Cathy Potter led the Book Buddies program one July afternoon under the shade of a large tree. **8.** Three-year-old Akshaj Karajagi used his time at the library to play with the toy train set.

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News roundup

A super fun time

1. The Rocky Hill Summerscape summer camp program recently celebrated a Super Heroes Day at the community center. Children, staff and even Mayor Claudia Baio donned costumes to get into the spirit.

Two die in crash

Two people died after fleeing police and crashing on Gilbert Avenue in the early morning hours of June 19. According to police, an officer saw a 2014 Toyota that was speeding and crossing the center line at 5:16 a.m., heading northbound on Maple Street near its intersection with Gilbert.

The officer pulled the motorist over on Gilbert, but he then drove away as the officer approached on foot. The car crashed a short distance down the street and both the driver and passenger died from their injuries.

The driver was identified as Nelson Viera, 27, of East Hartford. His passenger was identified as Iran Brugueras Jr., 21, of Hartford. The accident is being investigated by the Mid-State Accident Reconstruction Unit and the Rocky Hill Police Department's Criminal Investigations Unit will investigate any criminal aspect of this case.

Hearing scheduled on new school

The Town Council will hold a public hearing at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 15 in council chambers at town hall to solicit public input on a proposal to construct a new intermediate school. The projected cost is $48 million. If the council decides to move forward with this project, it would be put to a referendum.

Welcoming the freshmen

Freshman orientation will be held from 8 a.m. to noon Aug. 31 at Rocky Hill High School. Students will receive a general orientation and an opportunity to meet their freshman student advisors. They will also learn about all of the clubs and activities available at the school.

Walking for a cause

2. Students and staff members at the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School in Rocky Hill recently participated in Connecticut Walk4Hearing, sponsored by the Hearing Loss Association of America. The June 11 event raised awareness, as well as money, for the association.

Society needs tape machine

The Rocky Hill Historical Society is looking for a specific historic artifact – a working reel-to-reel audiotape player. The society has several reels of oral histories in its collection, but nothing to play them on.

The hope is that someone will donate, or at least loan, this piece of equipment so that these oral histories can be transcribed and posted online. Call 860-563-6704 or email info@rhhistory.org.

Man found in crawl space

The Rocky Hill Police Department, fire department and Aetna ambulance responded to a 911 call at 80 Town Line Road the afternoon of July 13. An unresponsive man was reported in a small crawl space inside the building.

The man, who was performing contract work in the structure, was determined to be dead. Police said the case is not considered suspicious and the man was later identified as Joshua R. Bujnowski, 32, of Hudson, N.H.

Fire damages house

A home on Winding Brook Drive sustained moderate damage in a fire that occurred the morning of July 17. The Rocky Hill Fire Department arrived to find a heavy volume of fire in the rear of the single-family home that had extended into the attic.

The blaze was brought under control in less than half an hour. Additional assistance was provided by Fire Task Force 51 from Cromwell, Wethersfield, Berlin and Newington. No one was home at the time of the fire and there were no injuries to firefighters.

Barbara Surwilo dies

Barbara Surwilo, the first woman elected mayor in town history, died July 15. She was 75 years old. She grew up in Hartford and moved to town in the 1970s, where she immediately became a political activist.

The state was planning to build a portion of the I-291 highway around Hartford from Rocky Hill through Newington, ending in the vicinity of Route 9 near Westfarms mall. Surwilo led the opposition to this plan and, after years of struggle, that portion of the highway was scrapped.

The Democrat served on the Town Planning and Zoning Commission for a dozen years before first being elected to the Town Council in 1983. She served as mayor from 2001-2003 and, after a few years off from politics, ran for and was elected to an additional four terms on the council.

Surwilo was highly educated, holding doctorate degrees in endocrinology and biochemistry. She was a member of the board of directors of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment. She was also an advocate of open space and farmland preservation.

Talking about the quarry

The Rocky Hill Historical Society will conduct a Quarry Roundtable at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 4 at Academy Hall Museum, 785 Old Main St. The local quarry was active from 1890 to the 1950s and became an official state park in 1990.

Anyone who hikes there, worked at the quarry, or has any other connection to, or interest in, the quarry is encouraged to attend this free roundtable discussion.

To learn more call 860-563-6704 or see rhhistory.org.

John Mehr honored

3. Town Finance Director John Mehr was praised at the July 18 Town Council meeting after he received a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. It was granted for the town's comprehensive annual financial report.

Mehr received the award as the person primarily responsible for preparing the award-winning report. Mayor Claudia Baio officially thanks him on behalf of the entire council. **RHL**

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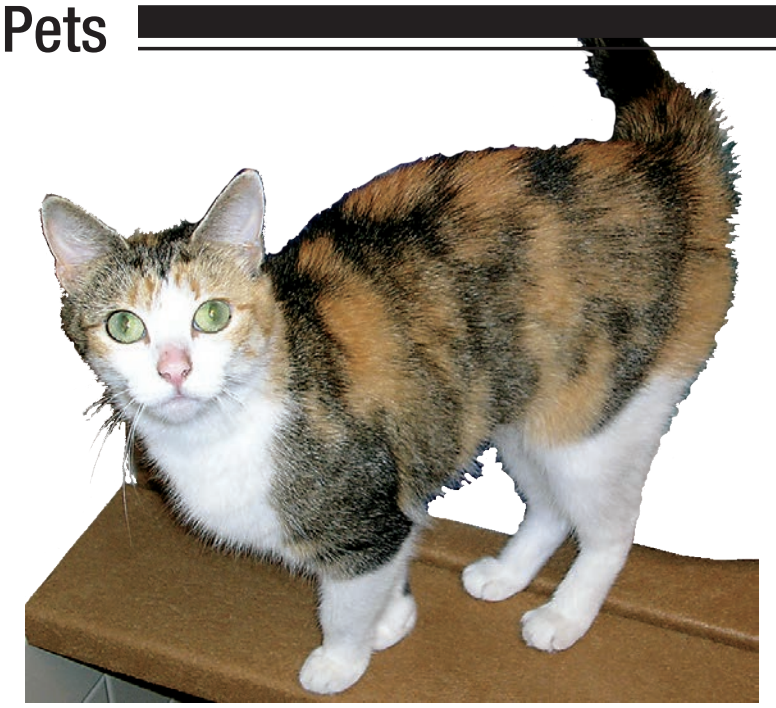
Bella the dog

Bella the dog is 4 years old and a terrier/pit bull mix. She has a friendly disposition and loves attention. Her ideal home would be either a single-family residence or condominium. Other dogs are OK, but she has no use for cats. Children need to be 6 or older. She has a high activity level and needs daily exercise. A family with prior active dog experience is preferred.



Bella the cat

Bella the cat has some calico and tiger aspects to her beautiful fur. She is a 2-year-old domestic shorthair. This sweet girl craves an active home with people who have prior experience with cats. She would fare well with teenagers and adults, but not younger children. **RHL**

Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption.

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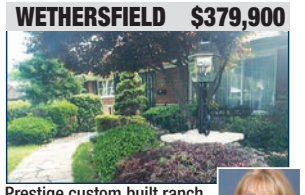

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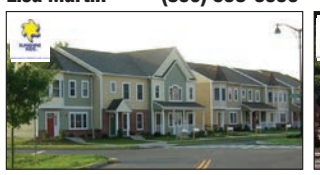
Diane McAdams (860) 538-6006



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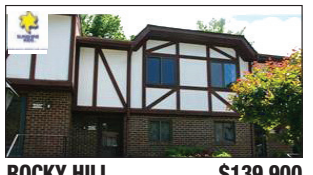

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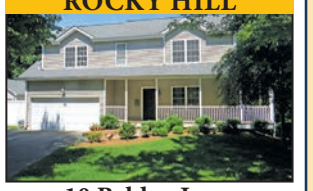

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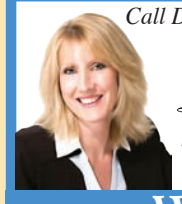

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Editorial

Why is it so hard to accept differences?

We read every day, or see on TV or the Internet, about violence perpetrated around the world by members of one group against members of another.

The differences may be due to race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or another factor. Fear of those who are in some way different sparks some people to commit acts of violence, others to take on bigoted attitudes and still others to simply avoid those who seem different.

Why is there so much mistrust? Why is there so much fear? Why is it so easy for people to dislike or distrust an entire group of human beings?

The answers are not simple. These problems and attitudes have existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Humans tend to be tribal, whether that tribe is based upon race, ethnicity, nationality or faith. There is a tendency to interact with those who are most like us because they make us feel good about who we are.

Americans can't deal in a civil manner with our politics. We pick a side, a philosophy, and then refuse to listen to any other ideas or opinions. Those "other" people, be they liberals or conservatives, clearly don't have a clue. They can't be patriotic Americans because they hold different views than we do.

So, we shout them down, shut them out, insult them and proclaim they are the spawn of the devil. They're not. They're just fellow citizens who have a different outlook. We need to turn off the emotion and turn up the civility.

When Justin Trudeau was elected prime minister of Canada this past year, he used part of his acceptance speech to encourage his followers to treat members of the opposition party like neighbors, not enemies. He deserves credit for making such a unifying statement.

Can you imagine Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton doing that? It's not even likely to happen at the local level in an election for mayor or a seat on the school board.

Look at all the richness of life that can be gleaned by learning about and accepting people who are different in one or more ways. Reaching out to them and spending a little time with them can eliminate the fear, break down the barriers, and enable us to better understand them.

The more you know someone, the less threatened you feel around them. You come to realize that they share many of the same values you have, like loving their children and striving to live a good life.

Yet we continue to fall back on old habits, old stereotypes and old fears. Why? Perhaps because it's easy. Breaking down those stereotypes and beliefs is much harder. But it's worth the effort. **RHL**

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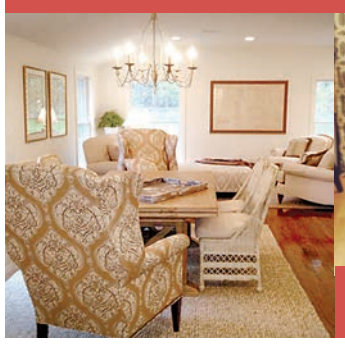

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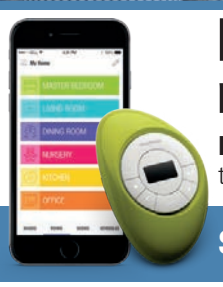

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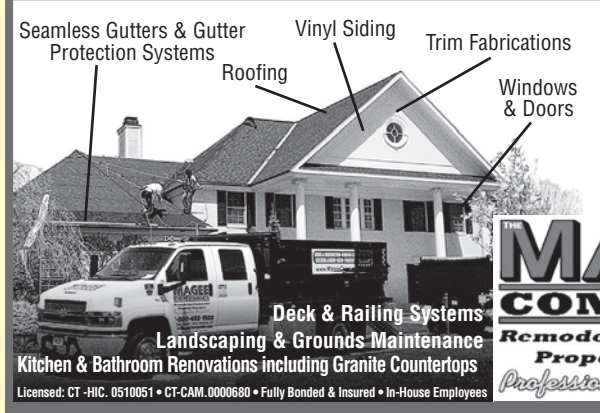
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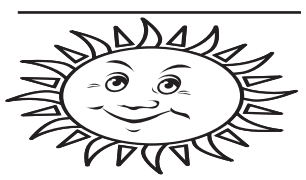

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern
When the AQI is in this range:	*..air quality conditions are:*
0 to 50	Good
51 to 100	Moderate
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
151 to 200	Unhealthy
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy
301 to 500	Hazardous

Air quality index

Knowing the quality of the air, how clean or how polluted, helps gauge the level of impact it can have on one's health – especially to those with respiratory distress, COPD, asthma, etc.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "ground-level ozone and airborne particles are the two pollutants that pose the greatest threat to human health in this country." So in the summer/warmer months, in order to know how to best deal with not-so-great air quality – the Air Quality Index (or AQI), was developed as a guide, to simplify things.

The AQI has a numerical value that corresponds to a category that is color coded … reporting levels of ozone, particle pollution, and other common air pollutants on the same scale. The range goes from 0 to 500: the higher the value, the greater the concern that poor air quality will have an impact. As soon as the number goes over 100, those in "sensitive groups" should be aware.

This summer, and going forward you may notice a higher frequency of "Air Quality" Alerts here in Connecticut – and there is a reason why. It is not because the quality of air is any worse, it has to do with a change in the criteria (the threshold) used to issue the alert, by the EPA. **RHL**

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